

Henry Mitchel, Maryland 400 veteran

Henry Mitchel (1754-?)

Private, First Maryland Regiment, 1776

Corporal, Second Maryland Regiment, 1777-1778

Sergeant, Second Maryland Regiment, 1778-1780

Henry Mitchel was born in 1754, in Ireland. [1] In early 1776, at age 22, Mitchel enlisted as a private in [Edward Veazey](#)'s Seventh Independent Company. [2] He was five feet, three and half inches tall. Many of those in the Seventh Independent Company were recruited from Kent, Cecil, and Queen Anne counties, and were in their twenties. [3] The average age was about twenty-five, but soldiers born in the thirteen colonies were slightly younger than those from foreign countries. [4]

The independent companies, early in the war, had a different role than [William Smallwood](#)'s First Maryland Regiment. They had the role of securing the Chesapeake Bay's shoreline from British attack. Smallwood's men, on the other hand, were raised as full-time Maryland soldiers as part of the Continental Army, and were divided between Annapolis and Baltimore. The Seventh Independent Company was stationed in Kent County's [Chestertown](#) and on [Kent Island](#) in Queen Anne County. [5] During this time, Veazey was uneasy that his company did not receive "arms nor ammunition" until June. [6]

While the independent companies were originally intended to defend Maryland, three of them accompanied the First Maryland Regiment when it marched to New York in July 1776. The transfer of the independent companies to the Continental Army showed that Maryland was more than willing to do its part to recruit the men needed for the revolutionary cause. [7] The independent companies and the First Maryland Regiment arrived in New York in early August, with the Battle of Brooklyn set between the Continental Army and the British Army, joined by their Hessian allies.

Mitchel served with his company at the Battle of Brooklyn in late August 1776. Along with the companies of [Daniel Bowie](#) and [Peter Adams](#), which suffered heavy casualties, sixty-eight percent of Veazey's company were killed or captured. Specifically, Captain Veazey was killed while Second Lieutenant [Samuel Turbett Wright](#) and Third Lieutenant [Edward De Coursey](#) were captured. [8] As a result of Veazey's death, First Lieutenant [William Harrison](#) took charge of the company. After the battle, only 36 men remained out of the original force of over 100. [9] The loss of life confirmed the assessment of the British Parliament's *Annual Register* which [described](#) how "almost a whole regiment from Maryland...of young men from the best families in the country was cut to pieces" even as the battle brought the men of the Maryland 400 together. [10]

The Battle of Brooklyn, the first large-scale battle of the war, fits into the larger context of the Revolutionary War. If the Maryland Line had not stood and fought the British, enabling the rest of the Continental Army to escape, then the Continental Army would have been decimated, resulting in the end of the Revolutionary War. This heroic stand gave the regiment the nickname of the Old Line and those who made the stand in the battle are remembered as the Maryland 400.

By the spring of 1777, the command of the Seventh Independent Company was uncertain since Wright and De Coursey were prisoners, Veazey had been killed, and Harrison had resigned. [11] As a result, the company, among with the other independent companies, became part of the Second Maryland Regiment.

Mitchel survived the Battle of Brooklyn and on April 8, 1777 he reenlisted in the Second Maryland Regiment for a three-year term and was promoted to corporal. [12] He served in this position, in the company commanded by fellow Maryland 400 veteran [John Hardman](#), until August 1, 1778. [13] He was discharged on January 10, 1780. [14] During his military service, he would have fought in battles at [Brandywine](#) (1777), [Germantown](#) (1777), [White Marsh](#) (1777), and [Monmouth](#) (1778). In the summer of 1779, along with Maryland 400 veteran, Patrick McNemar, he served in the Corps of Light Infantry, a unit in the light infantry. This unit was composed of agile and reliable men who should move ground rapidly and fight resolutely if needed. [15]

On July 16, 1779, the light infantry stormed the British fort at Stony Point, on the west side of the Hudson River. [16] According to a recollection from Connecticut corporal Stephen Army, the army crossed the river "in the night with muffled oars to prevent the British on board of some English ships of war" stationed nearby from hearing their movements. [17] Once on land, they engaged in a surprise nighttime bayonet attack, reportedly without loaded guns, with men axeing through the enemy's half-completed fortifications. Once the smoke cleared, over 500 British soldiers were captured, and the Continentals took possession of the fort. If Mitchel was a participant, his unit, composed Second Maryland Regiment members, would have been led by Major John Stewart and served as the left column of the attacking force.

Corporals, like Mitchel, had important roles in the Maryland Line. As a non-commissioned officer, Mitchel would have shouldered some of the responsibility for ensuring order and discipline among the Hardman's company in camp and on the battlefield. In 1779, discipliner of the Continental Army, [Frederick Von Stueben](#) wrote that corporals were to instruct their troops, keep order in their regiments, including breaking up disagreements between soldiers, and taking roll call every morning. [18] If corporals fell down on their tasks, they were to be "severely punished." [19]

In his position as sergeant, Mitchel still had a vital role in the Maryland Line. As non-commissioned officers, their duties included maintaining discipline within their company, and inspecting the new recruits. [20] Their other duties included carrying sick soldiers to the hospital as needed, reporting on the sickness of men within the ranks, and leading groups of men to guard prisoners or supplies if circumstances required it. [21] For these services they were paid more than corporals in Maryland, who they oversaw, and worked with, to keep order in place in the company, including breaking up disputes between soldiers. [22] In order to get in this position, however, their field officers or captains had to recommend them for promotion. [23]

Mitchel's life after his Revolutionary War service is not known. [24]

- *Burkely Hermann, Maryland Society of the Sons of American Revolution Research Fellow, 2016.*

Notes

- [1] [Descriptions of men in Capt. Edward Veazey's Independent Comp](#), 1776, Maryland State Papers, Revolutionary Papers, MdHR 19970-15-36/01 [MSA S997-15-36, 1/7/3/13]. Sometimes his last name was spelled Mitchell or Michel.
- [2] [Descriptions of men in Capt. Edward Veazey's Independent Comp](#).
- [3] Mark Andrew Tacyn, "'To the End:' The First Maryland Regiment and the American Revolution" (PhD diss., University of Maryland College Park, 1999), 24-25, 97; [Descriptions of men in Capt. Edward Veazey's Independent Comp](#).
- [4] For more information, see "[Demographics in the First Maryland Regiment](#)" on the Finding the Maryland 400 research blog.
- [5] Journal and Correspondence of the Maryland Council of Safety, July 7-December 31, 1776, *Archives of Maryland Online* Vol. 12, [4](#); Journal and Correspondence of the Maryland Council of Safety, August 29, 1775 to July 6, 1776, *Archives of Maryland Online* Vol. 11, [245](#), [272](#), [547](#), Tacyn, 33-34.
- [6] Journal and Correspondence of the Maryland Council of Safety, August 29, 1775 to July 6, 1776, *Archives of Maryland Online* Vol. 11, [318](#), [468](#); Tacyn, 37, 39.
- [7] Arthur Alexander, "How Maryland Tried to Raise Her Continental Quotas." *Maryland Historical Magazine* 42, no. 3 (1947), 187-188, 196.
- [8] "Mortuary Notice," *Salem Gazette*, Salem, Massachusetts, March 1, 1833, Vol. XI, issue 18, p. 3.
- [9] Revolutionary War Rolls, NARA M246, p. 92, From Fold3.com; Tacyn, 98.
- [10] Tacyn, 4.
- [11] [List of Regular Officers by Chamberlaine](#), December 1776, Maryland State Papers, Red Books, MdHR 4573, Liber 12, p. 66 [MSA S989-17, 1/6/4/5].
- [12] Service Card of Henry Mitchel, Compiled Service Records of Soldiers Who Served in the American Army During the Revolutionary War, National Archives, NARA M881, Record Group 93, Roll 400. Courtesy of Fold3.com; Muster rolls of the Second Maryland Regiment, Revolutionary War Rolls, 1775-1783, National Archives, NARA M246, Record Group 93, Roll 0033, Folder 15. Courtesy of Fold3.com.
- [13] Service Card of Henry Mitchel; Muster rolls of the Second Maryland Regiment, Revolutionary War Rolls, 1775-1783, National Archives, NARA M246, Record Group 93, Roll 0033, Folder 15. Courtesy of Fold3.com. He may be promoted on September 27 instead.
- [14] Muster rolls of the Second Maryland Regiment, Revolutionary War Rolls, 1775-1783, National Archives, NARA M246, Record Group 93, Roll 0033, Folder 15. Courtesy of Fold3.com; Service Card of Henry Mitchel; Muster Rolls and Other Records of Service of Maryland Troops in the American Revolution, *Archives of Maryland Online* Vol. 18, [138](#). Some records erroneously note he was demoted to private in September 1778, but this appears to be inaccurate.

[15] Todd W. Braisted, "[Light Infantry Never Surrender!](#)," *Journal of the American Revolution*, May 19, 2015. Accessed November 11, 2016; John W. Wright, "The Corps of Light Infantry in the Continental Army," *The American Historical Review* 31:3 (Apr. 1926), 455-457.

[16] Tacyn, 5, 173, 186, 196-197, 205-209, 210, 295, 311; Pension of David Moore, Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, National Archives, NARA M804, Record Group 15, Roll 1753. Courtesy of Fold3.com; Pension of Samuel Ferguson, Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, National Archives, NARA M804, Record Group 15, Roll 1038. Courtesy of Fold3.com; Pension of Robert Humphries, Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, National Archives, NARA M804, Record Group 15, Roll 1367. Courtesy of Fold3.com; Pension of John Trotter, Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, National Archives, NARA M804, Record Group 15, Roll 2414. Courtesy of Fold3.com; Pension of Abram Acherson, Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, National Archives, NARA M804, Record Group 15, Roll 6. Courtesy of Fold3.com; David Schuyler, *Sanctified Landscape: Writers, Artists, and the Hudson River Valley, 1820-1909* (London: Cornell University Press, 2012), 154; Joseph Plumb Martin, *Ordinary Courage: The Revolutionary War Adventures of Joseph Plumb Martin* (ed. James Kirby Martin, New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2013), 107; Jeremy Black, *Crisis of Empire: Britain and America in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Continuum, 2008), 160; Michael Schellhammer, *George Washington and the Final British Campaign for the Hudson River, 1779* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2012), 138-153; George C. Daughan, *If by Sea: The Forging of the American Navy - From the Revolution to the War of 1812* (New York: Basic Books, 2011, paperback), 191; Arthur R. Bauman, *General "Mad" Anthony Wayne & The Battle of Fallen Timbers: A Look at Some Key Events in the Life and Times of General Wayne* (Blomington, IN: AuthorHouse, 2010), 4-6; Ithiel Town, *Detail of Some Particular Services Particular Services* (Beford, PA: Applewood Books, 1835), 88. Reportedly Anthony Wayne, leading the attack told George Washington, that he would "storm hell" if Washington planned the attack.

[17] Pension of Stephen Avery, Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files, National Archives, NARA M804, Record Group 15, Roll 96. Courtesy of Fold3.com. The wife of Virginia soldier David Moore, Jane, recalled her husband saying that "they were made to go into battle with unloaded guns" made him suspect that was only what he and his fellow soldiers were told.

[18] [Frederick Stueben, *Regulations for Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States, Part I* \(Philadelphia: Styner and Cist, 1779\), 6, 82, 98-100.](#)

[19] [Stueben, 72.](#)

[20] James Thacher, *A Military Journal During the American Revolutionary War, from 1775 to 1783* (Boston: A Richardson and Lord, 1823), 458, 468-470, 473, 475, 483-484, 520; Journal and Correspondence of the Maryland Council of Safety, July 7-December 31, 1776 *Archives of Maryland Online* Vol. 12, [145](#); Muster Rolls and Other Records of Service of Maryland Troops in the American Revolution *Archives of Maryland Online* vol. 18, [335](#).

[21] Journal and Correspondence of the Council of Maryland, 1781-1784, *Archives of Maryland Online* Vol. 48, [343](#); Journal and Correspondence of the Maryland Council of Safety, July 7-December 31, 1776, *Archives of Maryland Online* Vol. 12, [125](#), [255](#); Journal of the Maryland Convention July 26 to August 14, 1775, *Archives of Maryland Online* Vol. 11, [50](#); Proceedings of the Conventions of the Province of Maryland, 1774-1776, *Archives of Maryland Online* Vol. 78, [23](#); Journal and Correspondence of the Maryland Council of Safety, August 29, 1775 to July 6, 1776, *Archives of Maryland Online* Vol. 11, [439](#); Journal and Correspondence of the Maryland Council of Safety, January 1-March 20, 1777, *Archives of Maryland Online* Vol. 16, [334](#).

[22] Thatcher, 45, 73, 476; Proceedings of the Conventions of the Province of Maryland, 1774-1776, *Archives of Maryland Online* Vol. 78, [92](#).

[23] Journal and Correspondence of the Council of Maryland, 1779-1780, *Archives of Maryland Online* Vol. 43, [71](#).

[24] Census records (1790-1840) show men named Henry Mitchell living in Alleghany, Queen Anne's, Harford, Frederick, Dorchester, Cecil, Worchester, and Baltimore counties.

<http://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc3500/sc3520/017300/017340/html/17340bio.html>